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South Africa: The National Party Split and Racial Reform

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An Intelligence Assessment

State Dept. review completed

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*ALA 82-10150
November 1982*

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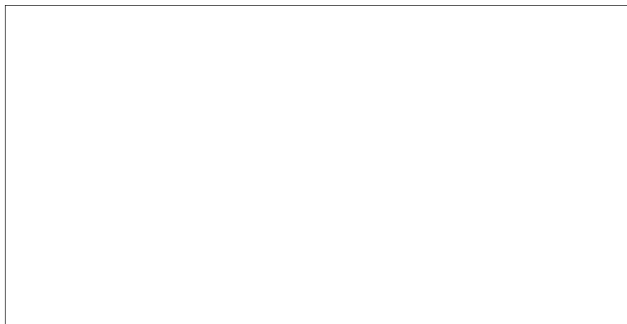
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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 9 November 1982
was used in this report.*

We believe that in the short term the net effect of the March split in the ruling National Party of South Africa will be to impel Prime Minister P. W. Botha to push through his reform program granting limited political rights to South Africans of mixed race and Asian ancestry. Over the longer term, however, Botha will have to demonstrate his determination to maintain white rule in order to placate conservative Afrikaners and prevent further defections to the right.

When the right wing split off from the National Party in March to form the Conservative Party of South Africa, it constituted the first Afrikaner opposition party in Parliament since the Nationalists came to power 34 years ago. The new party took with it those conservative rural and working-class voters most opposed to racial reform. The split has brought a long-overdue realignment of Afrikaner politics, which accurately reflects the social and economic cleavages within the Afrikaner community.

Prime Minister Botha apparently has concluded—accurately in our view—that the right wing is lost forever and that it would be futile to try to win it back. We believe this has spurred him to move forward with constitutional reform that would give some political rights to South Africa's 3.5 million Coloreds and Asians. We believe that Botha will have a strong executive presidency and Colored and Asian participation in Parliament in place before he is required to call a general election in 1986. Thus, for the foreseeable future, the Conservatives pose no serious threat to the regime, which still controls 70 percent of Parliament.

Still, the Conservatives can make life more difficult for Botha on a variety of issues. To preempt Conservative attacks, the Prime Minister has tightened enforcement of apartheid as it affects blacks and toughened his rhetoric on Namibia. Botha's tough talk—for which the Conservatives will hold him politically accountable—will make Pretoria less able to compromise on Namibia settlement issues. In their negotiations with the United States, we can expect the South Africans to stress the linkage between a possible antigovernment white backlash against any concessions they are asked to make on Namibia and the probable loss of domestic support for reform.

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November 1982

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During the next few years the South African Government will look to the United States for signs of approval for every step it takes toward reforming the present system of racial discrimination. The changes proposed by Botha constitute a revolutionary leap for most Afrikaners, but will appear glacial to outsiders and to South African blacks who are excluded from the reform. Because most black African nations believe that the United States has extensive leverage over the South African Government, they will view US acceptance of incremental racial reform as approval of the apartheid system.



25X1

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Confidential**Contents**

	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
Introduction	1
The Basis of National Party Unity, 1948-82	1
Swing to the Right	3
The 1981 Election	3
The Split	4
The Conservative Party of South Africa	4
The Conservative Platform	5
A Transvaal Base	5
Election Prospects	6
The New Challenges for National Party Politicians	6
Accepting the Loss and Rallying Support	8
Moving Ahead With Constitutional Change	8
Facing a New, Skeptical Constituency	9
Glancing to the Left	10
Outlook	10
Implications for the United States	12

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South Africa: The National Party Split and Racial Reform

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Introduction

South African politics have been dominated during the past few years by the debate over how best to protect white political, social, and economic power against growing nonwhite demands for genuine political rights. This debate recently has focused on proposed constitutional changes designed to give the country's 3.5 million Coloreds and Asians—but not blacks—a limited political role in the white-controlled political system. Tensions and anxieties among Afrikaners over an uncertain future turned into conflict within the ruling National Party between those pressing for limited reforms and those who reject the government's cautious steps toward political inclusion of Coloreds and Asians in the system.

This long-simmering dispute over the pace and direction of change came to a head early this year. The National Party's right wing, deciding that it could not support Prime Minister P. W. Botha's limited plans for change, split off to form the Conservative Party of South Africa—the first Afrikaner parliamentary opposition party in the 34 years since the National Party came to power. The new party now represents those conservative rural and working-class Afrikaner voters who have been most opposed to reform.

This paper discusses the realignment of Afrikaner politics since the party split and assesses the impact of the split both on the National Party's continued political control and on the pace of Botha's constitutional reform program. It also analyzes the prospects for establishing a multiracial parliamentary system within the next three years and the implications for US-South African relations during that period.

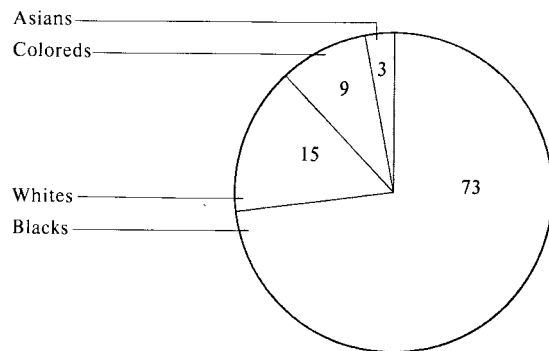
The Basis of National Party Unity, 1948-82

Afrikaner unity, once the key to the rapid transformation of the Afrikaner people from a group of down-trodden farmers into a modern oligarchy—and the foundation upon which the National Party rests—has been dissipating in recent years because of the material progress and social change it fostered. Urbanization

Figure 1
South Africa: Population Estimate,
September 1982

Percent

Total: 30,230,000 persons



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and growing economic power have disrupted traditional Afrikaner cohesiveness and given rise to new special interest groups within the Afrikaner community. An urban middle class has emerged, which is more receptive to the idea that traditional approaches toward racial relations must be modified, if only in the interests of Afrikaner—or white—survival. According to South African opinion polls, most of its members are willing to go along with limited changes to dampen nonwhite unrest.

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Figure 2



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In contrast, the more conservative groups—farmers, miners, lower level bureaucrats, and blue-collar workers—tend to cling to the narrow ethnic nationalism and racial prejudice that have served them so well in gaining and maintaining power. Most are frightened that any concessions to nonwhites will inevitably lead to majority rule and the destruction of white civilization in South Africa.

The National Party leadership tried to hold these factionalized 2.7 million white Afrikaans speakers together under a single political standard in the belief that a split in the ranks would destroy Afrikaner political domination of South Africa. It was a difficult and time-consuming task, diverting the leadership from the search for solutions to South Africa's complicated problems. Nationalist leaders spent much of their time trying to reconcile differing strategies for maintaining white control while holding in check the jockeying for party leadership, the regional factionalism, and the urban-rural tensions.

The Swing to the Right

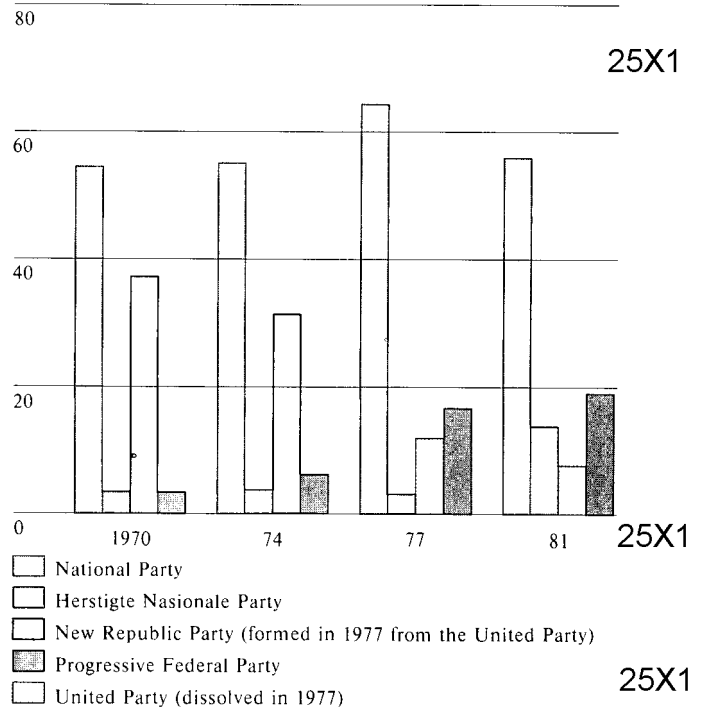
P. W. Botha came to power in 1978 as a compromise candidate in the wake of the worst political scandal in modern South African history. He inherited a party already polarized by his predecessor's cautious initiatives toward co-opting Coloreds and Asians into the white system as both potential allies against blacks and necessary manpower to maintain the present military and economic establishment.

Botha's initial rhetoric promised an increased tempo of progressive change. As he moved to consolidate his power within the party, however, Botha seemed more concerned with winning the confidence of the party's ultraconservatives than moving forward with the process of change. By 1981 the Prime Minister had backed off from exhortations that whites must "adapt or die." His highest priority, instead, became the retention of conservative support within the National Party.

The 1981 Election. Seeking a personal mandate to rule, Botha called an early general election for April 1981. In taking this step, the Prime Minister, in our view, miscalculated the conservative backlash against even hints of change, and underestimated growing rightwing sentiment. To the surprise of most National

Figure 2
Political Party Strength Based on
General Election Vote

Percent of total vote



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Party leaders, the Herstigte Nasionale Party, a tiny ultraconservative splinter group, captured nearly 15 percent of the total vote, although it won no parliamentary seats. Many Afrikaners, confused by or opposed to Botha's plans for limited reform, stayed away from the polls, according to observers on the scene. Of those who voted, nearly 30 percent cast their ballots for the ultraright. The bulk of rightwing sentiment was in the Transvaal, the largest and most populous of the four provinces. The Transvaal branch of the National Party controls nearly half the seats in Parliament.

The National Party, which for more than three decades has carefully gerrymandered constituency boundaries to maximum advantage, won 80 percent of the parliamentary seats, and Botha claimed a personal

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Prime Minister Botha

Camera Press ©

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Conservative Party leader
Andries Treurnicht

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mandate. The Prime Minister, however, is a professional politician whose entire career has been the National Party; accordingly, we believe he clearly understood the electoral signal that the National Party, at least under his leadership, had lost its most conservative voters. [redacted]

The Split. Andries Treurnicht, the spokesman for the National Party's right wing and the leader of the Transvaal branch of the party, in our view received the same message from the 1981 general election. The vote for the Herstigte Nasionale Party cut heavily into Treurnicht's conservative following, particularly among rural and blue-collar workers in the Transvaal. Many Nationalist politicians almost certainly saw their political support moving permanently to the far right and felt that their political futures depended on their moving to the right in step with their voters. It was probably their judgment that the only way to woo their constituencies back into the National Party was to take a strong stand in opposition to Botha's policies for change. [redacted]

According to diplomatic sources, after assessing the 1981 election Treurnicht and some of his close allies spent several months plotting to build an antireform and anti-Botha bloc based on the more than 40

conservatives among the National Party's 141 parliamentarians. By the following February Botha learned of this and provoked a confrontation with Treurnicht over "power sharing" with Coloreds and Asians. Treurnicht, admittedly caught by surprise, could only muster half his parliamentary following to vote "no confidence" in the Prime Minister's leadership. [redacted]

In the weeks that followed, Treurnicht was unable to gain the initiative in the face of a series of tactical political moves by the Botha forces, and in the end could not even maintain control of his party organization in the Transvaal. He and 15 fellow Transvaalers, plus one parliamentarian from the Cape Province, resigned from the party. They retain their parliamentary seats, however, until the next election, which must be held by April 1986. Treurnicht later told the US Ambassador that he had more residual support within the party. He said he believed he could have mustered more strength if Botha had not moved so suddenly, but that lifelong Nationalists did not have time to make a fundamental decision to leave the party. [redacted]

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The Conservative Party of South Africa

The Conservative Party of South Africa was launched in mid-March. It was quickly joined by the small National Conservative Party of Connie Mulder, who, as a Cabinet minister and Treurnicht's predecessor as head of the Transvaal branch of the National Party, narrowly lost the premiership to Botha. The Conservatives also got the support of other disaffected veteran National Party politicians including former Prime Minister Vorster. They picked up an additional parliamentary seat when the leader of the National Party parliamentary caucus joined them. [redacted]

The Conservative Party got off to an enthusiastic start, drawing large crowds of young people, students, dedicated supporters, and curiosity seekers. Because it failed to capture the National Party machine in the Transvaal at the time of the break, it had to start from scratch in building its base. It began organizing a network of regional secretariats and local constituency branches modeled after the National Party's structure. [redacted]

In trying to publicize its meetings and policies, however, the Conservative Party has been handicapped by an almost total media blackout imposed by the National Party, which controls television, radio, and much of the Afrikaans-language press. To help overcome the lack of press coverage, the party is giving priority to fundraising for its own newspaper. [redacted]

The Conservative Platform. The Conservative Party held its first congress in August, three days after Prime Minister Botha received the endorsement of a national congress of National Party members to move ahead with proposals designed to bring South Africa's Coloreds and Asians—but not blacks—into new constitutional structures that will give them some limited political rights. In sharp contrast to Botha's plans to create a parliament with three ethnically separate chambers and a mixed-race cabinet, Treurnicht called for the establishment of separate "heartlands" for Coloreds and Asians where they would be given political rights in much the same way as blacks in the "independent" tribal homelands. The system of residence permits and immigration controls now used to

limit black migration into the white areas would be made mandatory for Coloreds and Asians, and would be used to force them to relocate in the new heartlands. [redacted]

While differing on the treatment of Coloreds and Asians, the part of the Conservative platform dealing with blacks remains consistent with most National Party policies in its calls for quick independence for all the tribal homelands and a reversal of the black population flow into the white area. It deviates from Nationalist policy by calling for the end of permanent residence rights for blacks living in the white area. [redacted] 25X1

Senior National Party officials have criticized the Conservative program as naked white supremacy. A leading Afrikaans newspaper has called it a hopeless effort to return to the unworkable policies of the past. Nevertheless, the Conservatives' stand on racial policy, combined with Treurnicht's speeches portraying Botha and the National Party as betrayers of white civilization, are designed to strike a responsive chord among the large group of rightwing Afrikaners who are opposed to change. [redacted] 25X1

The party has taken a stand on few issues other than its opposition to reform. It is, however, poised to make political capital on Namibia. Treurnicht recently told the US Ambassador that he believed the voters were concerned about Namibia, which they saw as a testing ground for political change in South Africa. The Conservative Party considers the attempt at multiracial government in Namibia to be a failure and believes, correctly in our view, that developments that adversely affect white interests in the territory would have a strong emotional impact on South African whites. [redacted] 25X1

A Transvaal Base. The Conservative Party is, at least initially, a regionally based party. The major part of its support and almost all its organization is in the Transvaal. This is the largest and most economically important of South Africa's four provinces, containing both modern urban industrial areas and rich farmlands. More than half of the 2.7 million Afrikaners live in the Transvaal. It is therefore understandable

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that the Conservatives are concentrating their principal efforts in the farming, mining, and blue-collar areas of northern Transvaal, where opposition to Botha's racial reform policies is greatest. According to the US Embassy, the Conservatives have also gained some following among conservative Afrikaner farmers in the northern parts of the Cape and Natal Provinces. []

Treurnicht is trying to capitalize in particular on the opposition of Transvaal Afrikaners to bringing non-white minorities into the government. With the Colored population concentrated in the Cape and the Asians located primarily in Natal, most Transvaal Afrikaners have never dealt with these groups and cannot understand why Botha wants to co-opt them into the white system. According to public opinion polls, these whites, many of whom are in the middle or lower socioeconomic strata, view power sharing with any nonwhite as the beginning of a process which will end with a black takeover of South Africa. []

Because the group that joined him in breaking away from the National Party was smaller and the split point was further to the right than Treurnicht had hoped, we believe the Conservative Party leader has been careful to distance his policies from the Herstigte Nasionale Party. He hopes to appeal to the large number of conservatives he believes—correctly in our judgment—are still inside the National Party. In our view, he also does not want to be identified with the extreme right of Afrikaner opinion in order not to lose support from the Afrikaner cultural institutions and the churches, neither of which supported the regressive policies of the Herstigtes. Although less relevant than in the days when they were the bulwarks of Afrikaner political unity, these are still powerful forces at the grass-roots level. []

The first public measure of the potential strength of the Conservative Party came from a regularly scheduled political opinion poll published by a major Afrikaans-language newspaper in May 1982. The poll showed that the Conservative Party had the support of over 18 percent of the white electorate of 2.1 million potential voters and was favored by nearly 30 percent of Afrikaner voters. The party's support was highest among Afrikaners in the Transvaal, where it appealed to 38 percent of those polled. It did less well among

Afrikaners in the other provinces, drawing 10 percent in the Cape, 18 percent in the Orange Free State, and 23 percent in Natal. []

Many observers of the political scene in South Africa, including one of the most influential Afrikaner journalists, believe as we do that this poll measured the outer limits of potential Conservative support that exists among Afrikaners. In visits to northern Transvaal in mid-September, US Embassy officers gained the impression that the trend toward the Conservative Party there may have begun to peak. National Party leaders in the area told them that substantial numbers of defectors to the Conservatives appeared ready to return to the National Party. Indeed, recent polls show that white support for the Conservative Party declined from 18 percent in May to 14 percent in August. []

Election Prospects. The Conservatives received a swift surge of support in an August provincial byelection in which the National Party held onto a seat with fewer votes than the combined right wing. Treurnicht publicly claimed that he could have won a straight fight against the National Party and tried to reach an agreement with the Herstigte Nasionale Party in order to avoid future three-way contests that split the rightwing vote. The Herstigtes refused to enter into any election alliance. []

In our view, Conservative fortunes suffered a setback in early November 1982 when the party failed to win a parliamentary byelection in a conservative Orange Free State constituency adjacent to the Transvaal. In a hotly contested election—in which Botha's constitutional reforms were the sole issue—the National Party squeaked through with a 10-vote majority against the combined right wing. At the same time, the Nationalists made gains in two other constituencies, winning a newly created seat in Walvis Bay, the South African exclave in Namibia, and increasing its margin against the English-speaking opposition Progressive Federal Party in the Cape. []

Political analysts in South Africa interpret these results to mean that Botha has checked, although not necessarily reversed, the erosion of support to the right. While the National Party now has increased

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The Herstigte Nasionale Party

The party was formed in 1969 by a small group of ultrarightwing members of Parliament who broke with the National Party in protest over liberalization of interracial sporting events, detente overtures to black African states, and government willingness to accommodate English speakers.

Andries Treurnicht, then editor of a rightwing church newspaper, had encouraged the break and was expected to become one of the leaders of the new party. At the last minute Treurnicht balked at leaving the National Party. He ran for and won a parliamentary seat as a National Party candidate in the 1970 election, when all the Herstigte candidates lost their seats.

The Herstigte Party remained a political fringe group running candidates in every general election without winning a parliamentary seat. Its party platform was the defense of Afrikaner orthodoxy against a National Party sellout of white interests.

When Treurnicht and his followers left the National Party last March to form the Conservative Party, Jaap Marais, the Herstigte leader, offered his organization as a political base to all the defectors except Treurnicht, whom he had not forgiven for his duplicity in 1969. The personal animosity of the two rightwing leaders combined with the extremism of the Herstigte political positions will impede close cooperation between the two parties.

political momentum, we believe the rightwing parties still have the potential to win several additional parliamentary seats if they can bury their differences and work together. [REDACTED]

The New Challenge for National Party Politicians
We believe that at present the political signs from South Africa indicate that the split among Afrikaners

is causing anxiety and uncertainty among rank-and-file National Party politicians. Although the party is in undisputed control of the government, many of its elected representatives, in our judgment, are unsure of their hold on their constituencies, particularly in the more conservative areas where the right wing received a heavy turnout in the 1981 election. Most of them are used to winning elections with virtually no opposition. Those who have had to wage political battles have done so almost exclusively against English speakers and the cause of "left-leaning liberalism." Faced for the first time with the prospect of a political challenge from the right—and against their own kin—many are unsure how to run such campaigns. The South African press reports that the National Party is running political workshops in key districts.

[REDACTED] 25X1

All National Party politicians have been accustomed to receiving automatic support from the Afrikaner cultural, social, and religious organizations, which still have a strong influence at the community level. These institutions are now dividing along lines similar to those being drawn by the Afrikaner political parties. [REDACTED]

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The Dutch Reformed Church, for example, published in its June 1982 newsletter an unprecedented letter from a group of theologians questioning the scriptural basis of apartheid. Afrikaans newspapers gave heavy coverage to this, speculating that the church might be ready to discuss the need for changes in racial attitudes. These hopes were dashed in October, however, when the church synod took a conservative stand and refused to debate any of the issues. The meeting gave a standing ovation to Treurnicht, thus destroying National Party hopes that the church might play a positive role in promoting even limited reform. [REDACTED]

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South African press reports indicate that the Broederbond, the secret cultural organization, has commissioned studies on the effects of racial change on South Africa's future but otherwise appears to be standing aside from open politics, at least temporarily. The companies that control the Afrikaans-language newspapers, however, have become involved. *Die Transvaaler*, the leading Transvaal daily that has often

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served as the vanguard of new policy pronouncements for the National Party, has undergone a change of management that could cast its editorials in more conservative terms. []

Many politicians will have to explain and defend policies for constitutional change and power sharing about which they themselves are unsure if they expect to win the loyalties of the institutions they once took for granted. They will, therefore, look cautiously at the reform moves they are asked to support and will be reluctant to approve any changes that could provide political ammunition to the right wing. []

We believe most of the politicians can justify in principle the extension of controlled political rights to Coloreds and Asians on the grounds that this has been approved National Party policy since 1977. They can, in the short run, fend off Conservative Party criticism by pointing out that Treurnicht and his followers acquiesced to this policy while still in the National Party. []

Over the longer term, however, National politicians will face strong resistance from many of their Afrikaner constituents, as it becomes apparent that in order to make a multiracial government workable some of the more blatant racial discrimination laws will have to be amended. Many would also have difficulty justifying to themselves the efficacy of repealing such laws in the current racially charged climate, in which the recent church synod upheld the legislation that prohibits mixed marriages and makes interracial sexual relations a crime, and in which Afrikaner students voted against admitting even selected nonwhites to their university. []

Accepting the Loss and Rallying Support

The leadership of the National Party, while privately playing down the seriousness of the open ideological rift that has cut across the Afrikaner community, appears, in our view, to have accepted the loss of the party's right wing as permanent. Botha's way of publicizing the reform proposals after the formation of the Conservative Party was that of a leader reconciled to the reality that he cannot woo back the right wing by stopping the reform process that precipitated the split. Nonetheless, Botha's political experience

and his awareness of how little real change Afrikaners will tolerate has made him cautious in the presentation of the constitutional changes he intends to make. []

The Prime Minister instructed the President's Council—the government-appointed, joint white, Colored, and Asian deliberating body that has been studying the new constitutional proposals—to present its preliminary reports to Parliament in May. These reports contained ideas for a revised parliamentary structure to include Coloreds and Asians and a long-term plan to reorganize regional and local government to allow more political but not necessarily physical integration. []

Hoping to project the image of a strong and confident leader, Botha presented the proposals in July to a joint congress of the four provincial branches of the National Party. At the congress the Prime Minister received the party's endorsement to move ahead with plans to install a strong executive president and a three-chambered parliament for whites, Coloreds, and Asians. []

Botha then put his program before the individual annual provincial party congresses, which give the official stamp of approval to policy. He heard some grumbling but no real opposition in the three provinces in which he has solid support—the Cape, Natal, and the Orange Free State. Much to the surprise of most political observers in South Africa, the Prime Minister received unanimous approval from the all-important Transvaal congress. It had been predicted that he would face such serious opposition to both his policies and his party leadership at the Transvaal congress that several more National Party members of Parliament would defect to the Conservatives. []

Moving Ahead With Constitutional Change

Now that he has received party backing, we believe the Prime Minister intends to push the President's Council proposals for constitutional reform through Parliament while he still has firm control. He made this clear when he announced to the Transvaal congress in September that he would present legislation

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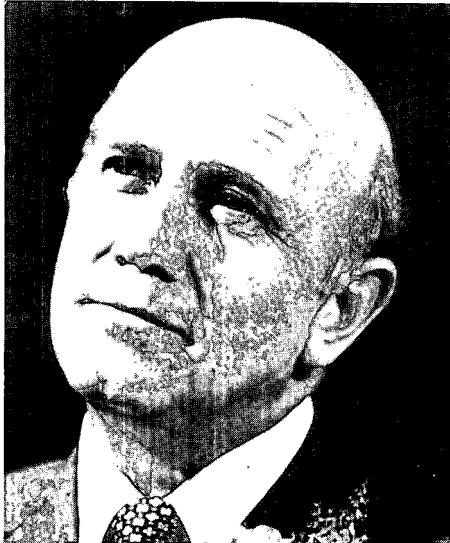
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F. W. De Klerk, Minister of Interior and leader of the Transvaal branch of the National Party, has been a driving force in swinging Transvaal support behind Prime Minister Botha. De Klerk, a middle-of-the-road politician who appeals to both the Afrikaner left and right, has displayed impressive political organizing ability since he took over the Transvaal leadership when the National Party split in February 1982.

to the next parliament on the first phase of the new constitution. He said he expected this phase to be in place by 1984—two years before he is required to call the next general election.

Although Botha's speech was short on detail, we assume he means first to create the executive presidency with its virtually unimpeachable seven-year term, its powers to initiate legislation, and authority to appoint and control a mixed-race cabinet that is independent of Parliament. We believe that Botha intends to be the first executive president. We also believe he has a good chance of achieving this within the next two to three years.

A politically experienced Afrikaner member of the President's Council recently confirmed to a US official that the constitutional bill to establish the executive presidency and the segregated three-chambered parliament would be introduced when Parliament reconvenes next January. He believes it will be passed

before the end of the six-month session. He also expects the new system to be in place by the end of 1984 in order to provide at least a year of experience before the 1986 elections.

Facing a New, Skeptical Constituency. There is, however, a great deal of hard bargaining and skillful drafting to be worked out on the new proposals before they can be acted on. In addition to winning over its own white voters to amend the Constitution, the National Party must convince credible leaders from the Colored and Asian communities to participate in a parliamentary structure that, it now appears, will be only nominally multiracial.

Most Colored and Asian politicians have refused so far to participate in the President's Council on two main grounds. They have said that they expect the result to give them little real power and that they are concerned that no provisions have been made to include blacks in either the deliberations on constitutional change or in the formal structures of the future. Recently, however, several Colored leaders, including the Reverend Allan Hendrickse and David Curry of the Labor Party, have indicated in private conversations with US Embassy officials that they might be receptive to participating in the new parliament if some concessions could be worked out.

We believe that these politicians and many other Coloreds have examined the Conservative Party's platform—particularly its regressive policies toward Coloreds—and realize that the National Party is probably offering them the best, and indeed the only, deal they can get. Like politicians elsewhere, they do not want to miss a chance to participate in the formation of what might possibly be their political base for the future. We anticipate that enough Colored and Asian leaders will use that justification to jump on the new constitutional bandwagon, thus enabling Botha to have some multiethnic structure in place before the 1986 election.

We believe, however, that the Colored community is increasingly divided on the issue of cooperation with the government and there are forces at work that

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could undermine the success of the new constitution. There is strong, open opposition against Botha's programs building up within the Colored branch of the Dutch Reformed Church, which ministers to 30 percent of the Colored population. Bolstered by the election of its leading theologian, the Reverend Alan Boesak, to the presidency of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in August, the Colored church recently declared apartheid a heresy. It also voted to sever all ties with the Afrikaner main church unless the two merge on a nonracial basis within the next four years. Boesak has signaled his intention to lead the opposition against the present constitutional reform plan by stating that, in his judgment, Colored leaders who participate in the new system will lose all credibility as representatives of their people. []

There is also a generational split in the Colored community. Student leaders at the major Colored university are campaigning for total rejection of the new parliamentary setup on the grounds that it entrenches white political domination and makes no provision for the black majority. We expect this student militancy to increase as issues are aired during future parliamentary election campaigns; this could lead to student-led unrest. []

Although we anticipate that Botha can put his constitution into place in the short term, we are not confident that it will be workable over the longer term unless some meaningful concessions in race relations are worked out with the Colored and Asian communities. Previous government attempts at setting up political institutions for Coloreds and Asians have failed. Although the nonwhite communities initially participated in these attempts, their leaders soon realized the new structures would give them only a semblance of political rights. The Coloreds and Asians eventually lapsed into political apathy, causing the government-sponsored institutions to collapse. We feel such a scenario could easily be repeated, further widening the gap between the races in South Africa. []

Glancing to the Left. While Botha and the National Party are warily keeping their eyes on the political activity on the right, they have not ignored the large English-speaking vote to the left. The political realignment of the Afrikaners has produced a flurry of

public speculation within South Africa about the possibility of some political accommodation between the two opposition parties—the Progressive Federal Party and the New Republic Party—and the National Party. Although the New Republic Party has recently endorsed the Botha constitution in principle, we do not consider the English-speaking opposition parties to be ideologically close enough to the National Party, even without its right wing, to expect any formal cooperation in the near future. Nor do we deem that the National Party is so seriously threatened from the right that it would seek to make common cause with the English speakers. Indeed, a widely read South African political commentator noted recently that the Nationalists would feel more comfortable dealing with Afrikaans-speaking Coloreds in Parliament than dealing with the English. []

Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, the leader of the Progressive Federal Party, recently estimated that the outside limit of Conservative support is 25 percent and that the Nationalists were in no immediate danger from the right. Slabbert told a US Embassy officer that the Prime Minister could take a large bloc of votes from the Progressives if he supported a declaration of intent that blacks were to be included in South Africa's future. Instead of any coalition with the left, therefore, we expect Botha to seek opposition support for his reform programs by appealing to English speakers to support the National Party at the polls, as they did in the campaign for white unity in 1977. []

Outlook

We believe that the conservative trend in South African politics that brought on the recent split in the National Party will, in the short term, spur Botha to move quickly in implementing his programs for limited constitutional reforms. The Prime Minister, in our opinion, realizes that he has permanently lost the Afrikaner political right and that backing off from reform will not win it back. As leader of what is now a

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more centrist—though still strongly conservative—political party, Botha probably believes that his best and perhaps only chance for enacting his reform program is to move ahead while he firmly controls Parliament. We estimate, therefore, that the Conservative Party has become a major factor in South African politics. It has begun to force Botha and the National Party toward the middle ground of white politics and to speed up the very process that Conservatives oppose. []

In order to prevent any further defections to the right over the next three years, however, the Prime Minister will, we believe, have to demonstrate his determination to maintain white control in order to placate conservative Afrikaners. The government has already begun to display a hardened attitude toward blacks in order to counter Conservative Party criticism of its policies. While laws that control black migration into white areas have been slightly relaxed, their enforcement has been tightened. The homes of thousands of black squatters have recently been destroyed, forcing black families out of the urban areas and back to the tribal homelands. New legislation is also being drawn up to nullify recent court decisions that favor black residency rights in urban areas. The government is also soft-pedaling efforts to consolidate the fragmented black tribal areas when white farming areas are involved. []

In our view, the government will continue to tailor both its short- and long-term economic policies more to the immediate interests of the whites rather than the blacks. For instance, we believe that the government will continue to concentrate on lowering the inflation rate because of the adverse effect on white buying power and ignore the resultant unemployment among blacks that will stem from tight money policies. We also expect continued security crackdowns on the leadership of the nascent black trade union movement in order to prove that they will not be allowed to pose any political or economic threat to the white community. []

If it appears to Botha in the next two or three years that the National Party political base is eroding over lack of confidence in his attempts to allow political

rights for the nonwhite minorities, we believe the Prime Minister has several options he could use in preempting the Conservative challenge:

- Rural constituencies in South Africa have about 15 percent fewer people than the urban constituencies. The Prime Minister has already publicly hinted that, should he feel under pressure from the right, he would not hesitate to redistrict these constituencies to cut down the number of potential Conservative parliamentary seats. 25X1

- The National Party could also broaden its appeal to the left. For example, the executive president, once installed, would have the power to pick his own cabinet. If there were any serious political threat from the right before the next election, we believe that the President might offer one or more Cabinet posts to English speakers—perhaps prominent businessmen rather than politicians—in order to attract support from English speakers at the polls.

- If the Nationalists appear to be seriously endangered by an erosion to the right, a possibility we do not expect in the near term, we assess that the Prime Minister could persuade most of the eight parliamentarians from the New Republic Party and at least a half dozen of the most conservative Progressives to cross over and bolster the National Party parliamentary strength. There have already been hints of this. When the battle for control of the National Party was raging last February and it was unclear how much support Treurnicht could take with him, there were rumors inside South Africa that the New Republic Party leadership, which supports the Botha reforms, considered, in principle, a merger with the National Party. Additional rumors at the time suggested that at least five parliamentarians from the Progressive Federal Party could easily have been persuaded to join the ranks of the Nationalists. [] 25X1

With the executive presidency in place before the next election, as we believe it will be, the National Party will have a strong leader and political momentum. 25X1

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Under the ground rules for the new parliament, debate on political issues would then be confined to closed committee hearings, which cannot be reported by the press. This would substantially water down the impact of the opposition parties and make it difficult for the Conservatives to orchestrate effective opposition to the government. [redacted]

Despite these options and other political tools at Botha's disposal, his government is bound to suffer occasional setbacks that will be interpreted by some observers as harbingers of doom for continued National Party rule. For example, although we expect a slight improvement in the economy over the next few years, another slump in gold prices with its concomitant recessionary effect in South Africa is always a possibility.² If this were to happen, many lower income Afrikaners still in the National Party could feel threatened in the job market by Coloreds and Asians whom they would see as being increasingly treated as their equals by the government. Their discontent at such a situation would only benefit the Conservative Party. [redacted]

A large rightwing backlash could occur if nonwhite rioting were to erupt on the scale it did in 1977 and 1978. Such disturbances are always possible in South Africa, although their timing is difficult to anticipate. Based on our experience, however, there is no doubt that the Botha government will continue to use harsh security measures to clamp down on any signs of discontent. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

During the next few years, Botha and the South African Government will look to the outside world, particularly the United States, for signs of approval, in words and deeds, for every step they make toward reforming the present system of racial discrimination. Botha will expect that interested US officials will view the split in the National Party as evidence of a willingness on the part of National Party leaders to embark upon a process of reform that—while appearing glacially slow to outsiders and South African

blacks—constitutes a revolutionary leap for most Afrikaners. As he did during the week the National Party was splitting, Botha will occasionally ask for public comment from the United States approving of his administration in order to strengthen his position. [redacted]

US relations with other African states will continue to be complicated by the slow progress of change in South Africa. Because most African states believe that the United States has extensive leverage over the South African Government, they will view US acceptance of incremental racial reform as approval of the apartheid system. [redacted]

Of greater immediacy to US interests may be the impact of the National Party split on the Namibia settlement process. The new Conservative Party stands ready to attack any settlement that compromises white interests in the territory. The South African media, reflecting the impact of the Namibia issue on domestic politics, have editorialized that the choices facing Botha are either a new constitution or a Namibia settlement leading to a government headed by the South-West Africa People's Organization, but that the electorate would not accept both. The Prime Minister has already raised Namibia as a political issue. To head off Conservative attacks, Botha has gone out of his way in public to associate the head of the Conservative Party, a former Cabinet member, with Pretoria's policy on Namibia. [redacted]

In recent political speeches, Botha has reiterated the unacceptability of a government headed by SWAPO, a likely result of the negotiated settlement. Pretoria's tough talk—for which the Conservatives will hold the government politically accountable—will make Botha less able to compromise on the crucial issue of Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola, or eventually to adopt a UN-backed plan. [redacted]

In their negotiations with the United States, we can therefore expect the South Africans to continue to stress the linkage between a possible antigovernment white backlash over any concessions they are asked to make on Namibia and probable loss of internal support for reform. [redacted]

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